us, the Burmese Government are also agreed on this point. The only difficulty that was standing in the way, as was adverted to by the hon'ble mover, was the existence of the Indo-Burma trade agreement. The Government of India have promised and assured us that this question will be taken up at the time of revision of this agreement. This agreement is now being discussed and a commission is sitting represented by the two Governments of Burma and India to consider the question of its revision. We have got the assurance, on our representations to the Government of India, that this point of the restriction and if possible the prohibition of the unrestricted improt of uncouponed rubber from Burma will be taken up at this conference and will be considered. Beyond this we cannot do anything as was pointed out by the seconder of this proposition. We have done all that could be done and we have got the support of both the Governments of India and Burma. We can hope that by the time the Indo-Burma trade agreement is revised, the problem of the unrestricted import of Burma rubber into India will be solved.

Mr. V. J. Mathai *(Planters):* Sir, it only remains for me now to thank the Government for all that they have done. If anything untoward happens Government will do, I am sure, whatever they can in the matter of helping us. I therefore beg leave of the House to withdraw my resolution.

Resolution, by leave, withdrawn

8. Revision of the existing system of franchise

Mr. A. V. Moothedan *(Chalakkudi)*: Sir, I beg to move that "*this Council recommends to Government that a committee be appointed with a majority of elected members of the Legislative Council to make suitable recommendations to the Government for revising the existing system of franchise—in particular the system of special communal electorates.*"

Sir, the present system of franchise was introduced as a result of the recommendations of the franchise committee which made a report in the year 1113. That committee was presided over by Mr. N. R. Sahasranama Ayyar and they recommended that Ezhuvas and Latin Christians may be given special communal electorates—5 seats for Ezhuvas and 3 for Latin Christians. That was a fundamental departure from the system we were having till then. The S. N. D. P. Yogam very strongly opposed that suggestion and several representations were made to the Government regarding this matter. I myself in the form of an adjournment motion requested leave of this House to discuss this matter, but leave was refused. One of the most fundamental defects of the present system of franchise is the pernicious

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

system of special communal electorates. As the Hon'ble Minister yesterday remarked, for responsible government there should be communal harmony and communal friendship. According to the present system there is no opportunity for such communal friendship. As it is, Ezhuvas cannot help Latin Christians, and Latin Christians cannot help Nayars. There should be opportunity for Nayars to help Latin Christians, Latin Christians to help Romo-Syrians and Romo-Syrians to help Ezhuvas. There should be mutual co-operation and co-ordination. That is the most fundamental defect of the present system of franchise. This subject was brought to the notice of the House on several occasions in the most glaring form. Whatever may be the conditions in the British Indian provinces, for the communities existing in Cochin State there was no necessity at all for introducing this system. Now what is the result? My respectful submission is that after the inauguration of these franchise reforms, communal tension and communal rivalry have increased. That is my personal opinion. I may be right or I may be wrong. For instance, in the ministerial party there is not a single Ezhuva. There is only one Christian.

Mr. K. R. Viswambharan *(Ezhuvas-Talappalli):* What about the Lady Member for Trichur?

Mr. A. V. Moothedan *(Chalakkudi):* For all practical purposes, husband and wife can be counted as one. In that party therefore non-caste Hindu members are inadequately represented or not represented at all. That is the direct result, in my opinion, of the present system of franchise. I have been in the fourth Council and now in the fifth Council also. I have studied the proceedings of both the fourth and the fifth Councils. The sum total of my impressions of the two Councils are that communal tension has increased and this is directly traceable to this pernicious system. The question is how to remedy this. One suggestion was brought by me last year, that is on 2nd Makaram 1115. It was like this. "This Council recommends to Government that the present system of special communal electorates should be abolished and a system of reservation of seats to these communities in the general constituencies should be substituted; provided that a candidate who secures more than half the votes of his community shall be declared elected. When there is no such candidate having the requisite number of votes from a community, that candidate from the community who secures the maximum number of votes, the votes of all the voters in the general constituency in favour of a candidate being taken together, shall be declared elected." This was rejected. I got 16 votes. There was a further improvement to that resolution and my friend

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

Mr. Krishnankutty at the last Budget Session introduced a cut motion. It was like this. "To abolish the system of special communal electorates and to reserve those seats in general constituencies with the following safeguard: the successful candidate must get at least 40% of the votes of community actually polled. But if no candidate is able to get 40%, the candidate who is able to secure the largest number of votes will be declared elected". On this there was no decision of the House. The discussion took a long time and at 5 o' clock the demand was put. Even the Hon'ble Minister admitted that Mr. Krishnankutty's cut motion was an improvement on my resolution. In the course of his speech Mr. Krishnankutty even offered to accept 20 %. That suggestion was also rejected by the ministerialist party. So far as the Government are concerned, Mr. Achyuta Menon offered a blank cheque.

Mr. K. Achyuta Menon *(Secretary to Government):* There was no cheque and it was also not blank.

Mr. A. V. Moothedan *(Chalakkudi)*: The ministerialist party wanted a pure and simple joint electorate with reservation of seats. There was no *via media* for them. The Ezhuvas fear that in a constituency where the Caste Hindus are in a majority they may not be able to elect a candidate of their own choice. For that purpose they wanted some safeguard and put it at 20 or 25 per cent. All these details were discussed then. I don't want to go into the details now. My request is that a representative committee may be appointed. Let the communities fight out their case there. As a result of the committee's working we may get a better or a more amicable settlement. That is why I suggested that without going into details a committee may be appointed. There is another point also. According to the present franchise, labour has not an elected representative. A member is nominated for labour. We have got a number of trade unions registered under the Act and there are more than 4,000 voters. Whatever may be the qualifications of a nominated member, they want an elected member. These are some of the things which require to be modified. I request the House and the Minister in particular to favourably consider this suggestion.

Mr. M. K. Devassy *(Adur):* Sir, I second the resolution. Let us hear the Government's position.

Mr. K. Achyuta Menon *(Secretary to Government)*: I wish to know whether other members will be speaking after my speech.

Mr. M. K. Devassy *(Adur):* It depends on the position you take up.

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

Mr. K. Achyuta Menon *(Secretary to Government):* My general principle is to speak last. But; if I get an opportunity to speak afterwards; it does not matter.

Sir, I will explain my position and then oppose the the resolution. One thing is clear. The resolution as it is tabled for discussion here is a very large one. "This Council recommends to the Government that a committee be appointed with a majority of elected members of the Legislative Council to make suitable recommendations to the Government for revising the existing system of franchise—in particular the system of special communal electorate." So that the commtitee not only goes into the question of communal electorates, but also intended to revise the whole existing system of franchise. It is an invitation to the Government to take steps to revise the whole existing system of franchise with pointed reference to the special communal electorates. I think, it will be acknowledged on all hands that a resolution of this sort recommending a disturbance or an upsetting of the existing system should be supported by reasons. The reasons cannot be left to the committee. Before the Government can be asked to revise the whole system, some reasons must be shown why we should revise the existing order. It is the task of the mover to convince the Government by well defined reasons that there are enough grounds for interfering with the existing system. It will not be proper to say that all those reasons will be found out or discussed by the committee. Government cannot accept the resolution without reasons, or leave it to the committee to find out the reasons. It was an extra-ordinary procedure when some of the members attempted to put a stop to the mover's illustrations in support of his main resolution, and he had to stop short with two reasons. One was that a resolution which he brought on this subject had a hostile reception in the House. He secured 16 votes. Another motion was also moved and it was not voted upon. These are the only two reasons. But a resolution of this sort which seeks Government to modify the entire system and is fraught with most far-reaching consequences cannot stop short with those 2 reasons. There may be unexpressed or unadduced reasons. But for me to reply, these are the only two reasons adduced. I won't base my arguments upon these reasons alone. It seems extraordinary that the resolution should have survived after the reasons adduced.

The hon'ble mover of the resolution made a categorical, statement that after the franchise committee pronounced its decision communal hostility in this State is on the increase. I venture to emphatically contradict that statement. There have been absolutely no indications in this House that communal animosities were on the increase after the franchise committee submitted its decision. There

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

are some people who are obsessed with this fear and who find the communal trouble in everything. Differences on political matters cannot be ascribed to communal jealousies or hostilities. They have never found it difficult, to whatever community they belong, to unite on questions of fundamentals of politics barring smaller questions affecting particular communities. We do not lift them to questions of nationl importance. It has not been in the least difficult for this Council to unite on common grounds because of communal inequalities which may exist. I may or may not be wrong. But to say that the recent changes which have happened in the ministerial party as it was first existed was due to communal reasons is a very serious statement and cannot go unchallenged. I think it will be disowned by the Ezhuvas themselves, that the ministerial party has not an Ezhuva as member is because its leader is a Nayar. For the very same reason, I think the Latin Christians also will disown that statement. If there is no predominance of Christian members in the ministerial party it is because other communities are in it and not to communal differences. *(Hear, hear)*. So that if this is the way in which this serious question is attempted to be argued, that is, that communal inequalities are on the increase because of the existing franchise, and then support that statement by a fact that the ministerial party has no Ezhuva, is very bad advocacy. Apart from that it is diplomacy of doubtful value.

Then what remains? My hon'ble friend the mover once brought forward a resolution here which resembled a strange creature with the posterior part national and anterior part communal. This was the first thing we had, a general electorate with a communal head. Next, came Mr. Krishnankutty's motion which was different. He improved upon the strange thing. He made the head and body national, but the communal sting was in the tail. Government opposed it. We can understand a measure which is fully national or a measure fully communal. But this sort of blending of the two we found very difficult to understand even at the time of the committee. A request for general electorate irrespective of class or creed, or a request for special communal electorates which are calculated to protect the existence of communities which cannot hope for adequate representation regard being had to their number, influence and standing, are all things which one can understand. But, as a sort compromise to propound a proposition half of which is national and half of which communal did not commend itself to us. There may be honest differences of opinion. There are some who maintain that there is no harm even in a communal electorate provided it is well worked out. So much with regard to the special

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

communal electorates. Now I wish to add a few words more with regard to the general question of revision of the franchise. This system which we have now in force is the result of the franchise committee report in the year 1113. This is the first Council that has come into existence on the basis of the enlarged franchise. Nobody can deny that the franchise was considerably broadened and enlarged, and as one of the members of that committee, I can also testify to the fact and this will be supported by all my brothren in the committee that we went about touring the whole State and we assembled a good deal of evidence. We also examined a number of respectable people. And even in cases where we recommended communal electorates, we were guided by the consensus of opinion among the leaders of those communities. That fact will be borne out by the depositions which are on records. I do not agree with the hon'ble mover when he said that we changed the then existing system. Communal electorates were already there. If I remember correct, the number only was increased.

Mr. A. V. Moothedan *(Chalakkudi).* There was no special communal electorate for Latin Christians.

Mr. K. Achyuta Menon *(Secretary to Government):* The advocacy on behalf of the Latin Christians may be disowned by them. You referred to Ezhuvas. I was replying to that. We frankly recognised the justice of their demand for increased representation, regard being had to the importance of this community. I am on solid and unassailable grounds when I say that most of the members of that community pleaded for 7 members and said that if we gave it to them, they did not want joint electorate. There was evidence from many respectable people belonging to that community that given 7, they would not press for joint electorates. They attached importance to numbers then.

Mr. A. V. Moothedan *(Chalakkudi):* They have found out their mistake now.

Mr. K. Achyuta Menon *(Secretary to Government):* The question is if they so easily change their opinions, whether Government should also follow suit. The difficulty is with respect to these changes of opinions. Unless there is a definite indication that they have put a stop to these changes of opinions, we would better wait for the next change. Therefore, the Committee becomes unnecessary at this stage. I am only saying why we proceeded in that manner. They said that they will not press for the joint electorates if they get 7. But they knew as men of politics and not political philosophers that the first thing is to get something and then agitate for more.

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

We said instead of 7 we will strike at a compromise of 5. With regard to the general qualifications of voters and other things there was no difference between the members of the various communities. Should we now change the existing system in the guise of doing justice to Ezhuvas or to Latin Christians? My submission is, it is only in 1113 that we went into the whole question. In common fairness we cannot argue that conditions in 1113 were very different from conditions prevailing now and that in 3 years we have developed such a change that the franchise should be revised. We cannot honestly say that in these 3 years our political consciousness or general equipment in the matter of electorates have so far advanced that we must make a further advance now. In other words, not a single reason that could be adduced now could not have been adduced at the time of the franchise committee. Whether the committee went wrong or not is another matter. It is open to the House to argue that even in its first report, the committee went wrong. I am only attempting to meet another argument that the conditions are different. The report was in 1113. I am only replying to that part of the argument that the conditions have not changed and developed to that extent that a whole revision of the franchise has become necessary.

Then there are other practical difficulties also at this time of the life of the Council. An electoral roll which is called into existence enures for 3 years and the law makes it obligatory that with the expiry of that electoral roll steps shall be taken to have another electoral roll prepared. There is no option left. If it is not prepared, the existing electoral roll remains in force for another 3 years.

Mr. T. P. Poulose *(Kanayannur):* If it is not revised just after 3 years, then, we can't revise it for the next 3 years. Is that your contention ?

Mr. K. Achyuta Menon *(Secretary to Government):* If we don't prepare a fresh electoral roll, then the electoral rolls prepared in accordance with the existing franchise must remain in force. Now that the life of the Council has been extended by one year, either the existing electoral roll must remain in force or steps must be taken to revise it. As a matter of fact, before the decision to extend the life of the Council was reached we have taken steps to prepare a fresh electoral roll and steps are in progress to finally publish it. The acceptance of this resolution means a waiting for another 3 years.

Mr. T. P. Poulose *(Kanayannur):* You need not publish it.

Mr. K. Achyuta Menon *(Secretary to Government):* We will have to do the process again and that within this year. And with another year of this Council based upon the existing franchise we

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

have very nearly 1½ years before us. Therefore, there is no immediate necessity also for this committee to sit now. It is to a certain extent premature.

Mr. T. V. Subramania Ayyar *(Nemmara):* On a point of information, may I know whether the final electoral rolls are being prepared?

Mr. K. Achyuta Menon *(Secretary to Government):* The preliminary electoral rolls have been prepared and the usual procedure must be taken in spite of the fact that the life of the Council has been extended.

Mr. V. J. Mathai *(Planters):* Would you make it over again next year?

Mr. K. Achyuta Menon *(Secretary to Government):* The ordinary procedure is another electoral roll should come.

Mr. V. J. Mathai *(Planters):* May I know, whether this roll prepared now as a preliminary roll will be adopted as it is for the next election ?

Mr. K. Achyuta Menon *(Secretary to Government):* From the date of expiry of this Council for the next 3 years the other electoral roll will prevail if we do not prepare a fresh one. Steps are being taken to get it on to its final stage.

Mr. V. J. Mathai *(Planters):* My question is whether the rolls prepared now will be the roll for the coming elections ?

Mr. K. Achyuta Menon *(Secretary to Government):* If they become final. We have not made it final. Supposing we do not take any steps, then the existing rolls will continue.

Mr. T. V. Subramania Ayyar *(Nemmara):* Without interruption, are you going to have revising authorities ?

Mr. K. Achyuta Menon *(Secretary to Government):* Yes. Only the preliminary rolls have been prepared by the Revenue authorities. I simply said that after 3 years we have to prepare another electoral roll with the normal end of the Council's term. Supposing the term was not extended, then this Council would have been over in Edavam and the existing electoral roll would have been over. If we do not prepare the electoral rolls now, then the existing rolls will be in force for another 3 years.

Mr. T. P. Poulose *(Kanayannur):* So, for every elections in future fresh electoral rolls will have to be prepared one year in advance. I will explain it. The term of the Council is now extended by one year. Since you are going to adhere strictly to the rules it means that every time the elections come, the electoral roll will be

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

prepared one year in advance. So that every time the final electoral rolls will be published one year in advance of the actual elections.

Mr. K. Achyuta Menon *(Secretary to Government)*: We are taking steps to see that it does not happen that way. We are giving elaborate time so that our electoral rolls will come finally only in proper time. We will take steps to see that the final publication of the electoral rolls will be only somewhere in Meenam or Medam, 1117. Suppose the committee sits now. The electoral roll can be prepared only after the committee's report is received and that should be before the term of this Council is over. So that it seems to me that this is not the time for seeking a change or revision of the franchise. The term of this Council which is based upon the existing franchise is not over. It has got full 1½ years more for its term to come to an end and it seems to me that it is rather quick work to ask for a committee even at this stage.

I suppose that I have spoken sufficiently on the merits of this resolution and I pointed out also one practical difficulty. If this difficulty does not appeal to you, you need not accept it. Merits alone need be taken. Whether from the point of view of substance of this resolution or from the point of view of the practical difficulties of acccepting it, it cannot commend itself to the acceptance of the Government, and the Government are constrained to oppose the resolution.

Mr. M. K. Devassy *(Adur)*: Sir, I rise to support the resolution moved by the hon'ble member for Chalakkudi. In fact I did not expect the Government to oppose a resolution of this sort, a resolution which suggests the best and most acceptable form in which a very difficult problem could be attempted to be solved. I was more surprised to hear the manner in which the Government Secretary was trying to substantiate the opposition to this resolution. We are not strangers to the highly intellectual dissecting capacity which the Government Secretary has got in dealing with any resolution presented before this House. I am sometimes reminded, when you dissect these resolutions and answer them part by part, of a scientist who was doubting the existence of soul and began to dissect man part by part and finally could not find out where the soul was. It sometimes happens that in this meticulous dissection of a resolution, when you deal with it part by part, you miss the soul in it and we do not wonder that sometimes the opposition based on such a mistaken dissection is not well grounded on reasons. Sir, the resolution has been divided by him into two categories one being as suggesting a general revision of the franchise for which he

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

was stating that the hon'ble mover has not adduced sufficient reasons. In other words, he takes it for granted that the recommendations made by the franchise committee are fully acceptable to the people. It would be a grave mistake to think that the people of Cochin are today satisfied with the limited franchise that has been recommended by the last franchise committee report and the Government orders thereon. It is a greater mistake to think that there have not been sufficient changes in the conditions which were existing at the time when the franchise committee report was framed. I would say that it is too much to expect that politically advanced people of Cochin will be satisfied with the present limited franchise granted to them. It is quite possible that if.....

Deputy President: Mr. Devassy, I would like to make one point clear. From the speech of the hon'ble mover it was clear that he wanted to recommend a revision of the communal electorate. If he now wants to restrict the resolution to that particular issue, it can be so restricted. There is no harm. The resolution as it stands now is a recommendation for a general revision, as the Secretary to Government has rightly pointed out. We should decide whether we are to recommend for a general revision or a change in the communal system only.

Mr. K. R. Viswambharan *(Ezhuvas-Talappalli):* As it stands it is for a general revision.

Mr. T. P. Poulose *(Kanayannur):* Some incidental changes may be necessary by way of delimitation etc., if communal electorates are abolished. So the resolution may stand as it is.

Deputy President: There is no use of hide and seek policy in these matters. I want to know whether the House wants to restrict the issue to communal electorates or to recommend to Government a general revision of the franchise.

Mr. K. R. Viswambharan *(Ezhuvas-Talappalli):* We want a general revision.

Mr. M. K. Devassy *(Adur):* I am glad that the House also understands the resolution as it stands and as has been understood by me. If a particular school of thought in Cochin think that they are entitled for adult franchise today, I should think that it is wrong to say that they are entirely mistaken.

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

Mr. K. Achyuta Menon *(Secretary to Government):* I never said that.

Mr. M. K. Devassy *(Adur):* There are weighty reasons for the people of Cochin now to demand a revision of the franchise because they are not satisfied with the existing franchise system. If your argument was started on the impression that we are fully satisfied with the recommendations of the franchise committee, then you are entirely mistaken.

Mr. K. Achyuta Menon *(Secretary to Government):* I will make myself clear. I cannot see the points in the mind of the hon'ble members, but only from their arguments advanced on the floor of this House. I will reply to your arguments in due course.

Mr. M. K. Devassy *(Adur):* I wish to place before the House that the question of introducing adult franchise is one of the most important problems to be solved and which could not possibly be solved without it being placed before the franchise committee. I may also point out to this House in answer to the contention raised by the Government Secretary that there has not been any change whatsoever in the conditions existing in the State between the time of preparing the franchise committee's report and the present period, that these 3 years are the most memorable years in the history of Cochin, because when you were preparing the report of the franchise committee you were facing a people who were unaccustomed to any sort of responsible government.

It will be idle to believe that the introduction of partial responsible government in Cochin and the constitutional reforms introduced in Cochin have absolutely no influence on the people of Cochin. It has far-reaching changes both with regard to the government and with regard to the people. It has taught the people what exactly it is to co-operate with the Government as well as their representatives in the conduct of the government. It has introduced naturally a new political consciousness. It has taught them what party system is. It has taught them what exactly the duties which devolve upon a voter in the correct exercise of his vote, in the proper selection of the representatives who are to run the government here. So that I wish to clear that misapprehension of the Government in thinking that no changes whatsoever have taken place. These great changes which have taken place in the course of three years and which naturally have their effect on the political consciousness of the people of Cochin, I believe, have enabled them to claim the proper right of being participants in the government of Cochin by giving everyone of them a right of voting independent of the question of property

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

qualification. Now, Sir,the question is if on this major issue of adult franchise and a revision of the franchise, because of the increased political consciousness of the people of Cochin as a result of the constitutional reforms introduced here, a revision of the general franchise can be justified. The other part of the resolution relates to the question of communal electorates. It may be quite probable that the franchise committee has acted with the best of intentions and on the evidence which was presented before them then. It could not also probably have decided better at that time. We only say whether rightly or wrongly the decision arrived at by you has really given a set back to the political progress in Cochin. I do not for a moment agree with my hon'ble friend Mr. Moothedan in suggesting that the introduction of special electorates in Cochin has given rise to increased communal hostility. But I would think that the introduction of separate electorates in Cochin has given the greatest set back to the political progress in Cochin inasmuch as it has kept out of the political circle of Cochin one or two important communities which could not be ignored in the common political progress of our country. I would think that it is idle on the part of the Government to argue that to keep two communities which have a status and a standing in Cochin State as if they were lepers entirely out of the electoral field of Cochin, without giving them a right of exercising their vote in the election of the candidates from the general constituencies, as an unimportant question altogether which the Government could ignore as they like. I would think, Sir, that the several resolutions that have been introduced in this behalf in this House have most unfortunately received decisions which they did not deserve. With regard to the first resolution introduced and referred to by my hon'ble friend Mr. Moothedan some doubt was felt as to the correctness of the exact form and proportion in which the problem was proposed to be solved. I had occasion and many of my hon'ble friends sitting on this side of the House joined with me then to suggest that some time could be taken by getting an adjournment of the discussion of that resolution, for all the members and parties of this House to put their heads together and to arrive at a common feasible solution. Unfortunately, that proposal could not gain acceptance at the hands of the majority of the members of this House including the Government with the result that the resolution was put to vote as it then stood. The result was that the first resolution on the subject introduced by my friend Mr. Moothedan could not get the benefit of perfection.

When the second resolution of my friend Mr. Krishnankutty came, which was decidedly an improvement on the first, again it

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

unfortunately happened, whether deliberately or not, the resolution was talked out. When therefore on a problem of this sort this House could not get the opportunity of properly arriving at a solution and when we have got a most opportune time for considering that proposition now, since the Council's term is extended, I would think this is the safest and the most moderate manner in which an attempt could be made at solving such an important problem. Without any reference to the respectability of the evidence that has been placed before the committee I make myself bold to state that so far as the question of separate electorates is concerned even among the Ezhuvas there are two schools of thought. And I will be the last man to concede that the views expressed here by my hon'ble friends Messrs. Krishnankutty and Viswambharan, who have a standing in their community and who can well represent the views of their community to a very large extent, could be ignored by this House as if they do not command popular support at all. I do not for a moment wish to say that any other view is not existing in their community. Each has to be measured on its own merits. I only wish to say that so far as those members who do not belong to these two communities are concerned they have a duty to inform the Government of the necessity of bringing every voter of Cochin State to the common platform so that they may exercise their votes in such a way as to see that a member sitting in this House has come here with the help of the votes of all communities. There is a duty on every member of this House again to think that when questions affecting Ezhuvas come here, they should deal with these questions as if they will have to face the Ezhuvas also in a general election tomorrow. There is the duty again on the part of this House to think that when questions affecting Christians come here an Ezhuva should not face them irresponsibly, simply because he may not have to face the Christian voters tomorrow. These questions have to be deeply considered and that great goal towards which all progressive schools of thought are advancing has to be approached by us carefully, cautiously and without losing time. I should therefore think, Sir, that this is the proper occasion for the Government to consider the *pros* and *cons* of this question by placing it before a franchise committee and doing whatever is necessary for the solution of the problem. I would think that a committee will be the proper body to consider these several aspects of the question and to arrive at a proper solution. With these few words, I support this resolution.

Mr. T. V. Subramania Ayyar *(Nemmara):* Sir, I have great pleasure in supporting the resolution moved by my friend theh on'ble member for Chalakkudi. The question of franchise has always been

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

a thorny problem and several attempts have been made to solve it satisfactorily in the best interests of the country. I am aware, Sir, that I am treading on dangerous grounds, when I make an approach to this subject. And I fear that opposition both from among some of my political friends as well as some others with whom I seldom agree. There is also a misapprehension, rightly or wrongly, that when a person of a minority community attempts to dabble in franchise matters he is unconsciously influenced by a sort of self-interest by advocating general constituencies as against communal constituencies. I may not have succeeded in eliminating that fear in my mind, but I may confess that I have made the greatest effort to take a detached view of this problem. I have heard about the reasons why originally the system of communal electorates was introduced in India. Without going into the motives actuating the Governments in British India on which we have modelled our own franchise system for the introduction of the communal system, I have only to say this much. That was at a time at or about 1911—I speak subject to correction. It was during the time of Minto-Morely Reforms, that this system of dividing the community for the purpose of franchise was introduced. It was then that the communal electorates were provided for the first time for the Muslims.

At the time when this system was introduced there was much criticism in the country. One important factor was that at or about the time the policy of dividing the country by setting up one community against the other was favoured by high-placed British officials in India. The thin end of the wedge of communalism was introduced in the Indian body politic not with a view to benefit the country but in order to divide the unity of the country, to divide one important section of the community from the other, so that there cannot be a united and strong body of nationalists who will fight the Government. That was the motive for the introduction of this new system in British India.

Mr. T. P. Poulose *(Kanayannur):* Were there not special electorates for other communities also under the Minto-Morely Reforms?

Mr. T. V. Subramania Ayyar *(Nemmara):* Apart from Muslims, to the best of my information, I think the Indian Christians also were given this special electorates.

Mr. T. P. Poulose *(Kanayannur):* What about non-Brahmins?

Mr. T. V. Subramania Ayyar *(Nemmara):* No. We found a very strange spectacle of 97 per cent non-Brahmins in the Madras

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

Presidency claiming protection as against 3 per cent Brahmins and claiming that certain number of seats should be reserved for them to safeguard their interests. That came only afterwards and not in 1911. I think that is a sort of insult to the non-Brahmins themselves and I do not wish to repeat the story here.

At the time of the introduction of the reforms of 1911 the main motive for the introduction of the communal electorate was for the purpose of dividing the nation so that one can be played against the other. That was the principal motive for the introduction of this measure. Subsequently, this monster became hydra-headed; but it is to be said to the credit of the Indian Christians that even to this day the vast majority of them in British India do not want separate electorate.

Mr. K. V. Menon *(Publicity Officer):* Why?

Mr. T. V. Subramania Ayyar *(Nemmar):* I am sorry the Hon'ble Publicity Officer who is usually silent is provoked by my statement.

Mr. M. K. Devassy *(Adur):* Why should you be sorry?

Mr. T. V. Subramania Ayyar *(Nemmara):* I am not sorry. I am really happy. After the system of communal electorates began in British India gradually the Muslims got separate seats. Afterwards, certain others also began to claim separate seats. My point is that without tracing the whole history of the franchise system in British India one important object, if I may call it, is entirely absent in Cochin. That is, here I take it, the Ruling House or the Ruler or the people who are holding power are not at all anxious to divide the communities into separate compartments so that they can play one community against the other. I take it that that spirit is absent. So, when any such motive is totally absent in Cochin, what I say is, there is no political reason for dividing communities against each other for the purpose of exercising absolute political control. To quote a portion of the Franchise Committee Report of which my hon'ble friend the Secretary to the Government was even a member and a prominent member too, when this question of communal vs. general electorates came into prominence they had remarked also

> "amidst this general welter of competing claims and irreconcilable differences of opinion, the need for accommodation of some sort, as the price of an enduring peace, becomes evidently imperative and it is , in this frame of mind, that we have ventured to approach this subject. There can, in our opinion, be no doubt that the tendencies of special communal representation are always inimical to the growth of a healthy, national outlook which is, or should be, of the essence of sound citizenship."

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I for one agree with the Hon'ble Secretary to the Government that these are words which must be borne in mind in a discussion on a motion of this kind. I fail to understand why at all there should be a set back. I fail to understand again why in the existing circumstances and conditions in Cochin, any particular community, except perhaps the Depressed Classes, cannot hope to come in without separate communal electorates. I am only putting that aspect of the problem for the sake of adducing an argument for the necessity of such a committee.

Mr. T. P. Poulose *(Kanayannur):* How many Ezhuvas got into this Council before the communal electorates were introduced?

Mr. V. J. Mathai *(Planters):* I will say all the elected members were Ezhuvas.

Mr. T. P. Poulose *(Kanayannur):* That is entirely a different aspect. Mr. Subramania Ayyar was saying that except in the case of the Depressed Classes all the communities will be able to get into the Council without there being separate electorates for them. I am asking again how many Ezhuvas had been in this Council before the communal electorates were introduced.

Mr. A. V. Moothedan *(Chalakkudi):* In every member there was an element of Ezhuva *(Laughter).*

Mr. T. P. Poulose *(Kanayannur):* That is entirely a different aspect of the case. I was only answering Mr. Subramania Ayyar's statement.

Mr. T. V. Subramania Ayyar *(Nemmara):* So far as my knowledge goes, my friend Mr. Krishnankutty had the unique distinction of coming in through a general constituency. But let me ask then, how many others stood for election from general constituencies.

Mr. K. V. Menon *(Publicity Officer):* Why did they not stand?

Mr. T. V. Subramania Ayyar *(Nemmara):* The difficulties of the elections are innumerable, so much so, even if Mahatma Gandhi were to stand for an election, unless he has sufficient experience in this electioneering business and the various other tactics involved in it, even he can be possibly defeated.

Mr. K. R. Viswambharan *(Ezhuvas-Talappalli):* Even our Minister with his knowledge about elections was defeated once.

Mr. T. V. Subramania Ayyar *(Nemmara):* I am not concerned here with the Minister. He is just like many of us here, except that he has been in the Council for a long time. I am not enamoured of the name "Minister" or frightened by that.

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Mr. K. Achyuta Menon *(Secretary to Government):* Have you looked at the nominations of Kunnamkulam and Cheruthuruthi? Have you looked at them? Ever since the Council was constituted the result is the same.

Mr. T. V. Subramania Ayyar *(Nemmara):* I do not know about all that. We found one Mr. Kurup standing against Mr. C. Rajagopalachari, for the University seat last time and he too got a few votes against C. Rajagopalachari. On that ground we cannot say that Kurup was a better candidate than Rajagopalachari. After all, in matters like election surprises are quite common.

Mr. C. V. Iyyu *(Kunnamkulam):* Don't you know that Mr. George Joseph was defeated in the University election?

Mr. T. V. Subramania Ayyar *(Nemmara):* Leaving apart all that, in elections, surprises very often occur. Simply because a particular person gets defeated it need not be said that he was an inferior candidate or any other candidate who succeeded in any election to be a superior candidate. I am only on that point.

Mr. K. R. Viswambharan *(Ezhuvas-Talappalli):* Your point was that even without communal electorates Ezhuvas can get into the Council.

Mr. T. V. Subramania Ayyar *(Nemmara):* Yes, they will be able to come to the Council.

Mr. K. Achyuta Menon *(Secretary to Government):* So even if there is no committee they can come if the votes are properly exercised. Is that your contention?

Mr. T. V. Subramania Ayyar *(Nemmara):* What I say is, for the purpose of the particular resolution, you say that we are living in times which are far advanced, which are being electrified every minute. I ask, is the Ezhuva community in the same position today as it was 10 years back?

Mr. K. V. Menon *(Publicity Officer):* Ask them.

Mr. T. V. Subramania Ayyar *(Nemmara):* The whole mistake consists in my hon'ble friend not understanding me.

Mr. K. V. Menon *(Publicity Officer):* You are pleading for the general constituency.

Mr. T. V. Subramania Ayyar *(Nemmara):* I was trying to make out a case and even convince Mr. K. V. Menon about the soundness of my argument for general constituency and I was bringing the example of Ezhuvas and trying to argue with my friend

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Mr. Viswambharan and point out to him that the Ezhuva community has become so advanced that any Ezhuva can get elected in a general constituency. I mean to say that the candidate of the standing of my friend Mr. Viswambharan can easily get into a general constituency and come out successful provided we have got the proper type of voters and provided also that the members of the other communities have also some sort of confidence in him. If you want another example, I take the Nemmara Constituency. At the time of the last election there were about four hundred voters of the Ezhuva community there. Nemmara is a small constituency, the total number of voters is somewhere about 1700 of which about 600 were absentee voters. The actual number of votes polled was 1085 or 1087. Having stood as a candidate there I have analysed these figures myself. About 500 or 600 voters were absent from the constituency, whereas no one of the Ezhuva members was absent. They are all agriculturists holding small items of properties and coolies paying a little tax to the Government. They are all inhabitants of the place. Supposing an Ezhuva stands there I am sure all these 400 votes would have gone *en bloc* for him and with some support of some members of other communities he could easily get elected.

Mr. K. V. Menon *(Publicity Officer):* What is the inference?

Mr. T. V. Subramania Ayyar *(Nemmara):* The inference is, provided a candidate is a proper candidate, an Ezhuva as such need not be afraid of getting into the Council even from a general constituency.

Mr. T. P. Poulose *(Kanayannur):* How is it that all the 400 votes will be available for him? You said that with the support of a few members of other communities he can get elected. What is the explanation for these 400 Ezhuvas voting *en bloc* in favour of the Ezhuva candidate?

Mr. T. V. Subramania Ayyar *(Nemmara):* You are only anticipating my argument. The population in the State is so broad-based that in no particular place in this State is the Ezhuva voter absent. In any distant part in Cochin the Ezhuva community is so widely spread that there is not even one constituency in which the Ezhuva voters are predominantly absent. There is no use of interchanging words between you and me on a point like this. Now my point is this. Before the Franchise Committee, I think Mr. Krishnan said that the Ezhuva Community is in favour of general constituencies provided they were given the adult franchise. Now, if by giving adult franchise to all the subjects in the State the principle of communal electorate itself can be abolished, I say it is a wise system.

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Anyhow we are not on that point. My only point is a case has been made out for a revision of the franchise system either by the adoption of the general constituency system with or without reservation or if the several minority communities are afraid that they cannot come into the Council through the door of the general constituency there is a system of proportional representation with transferable votes, which has the merit of not only providing for the entry of minorities, but also assimilating with it all the advantages of the general electorate. Any such system can be attempted with or without reservation. Whatever it is, it is a problem which has to be gone into by a committee with a view to eliminate the separate constituency system and to find out a system which will be for the better growth of the nationalism in the country.

Apart from that also a broad-based franchise is absolutely necessary for the efficient working of democracy and it is no use merely saying that we are not fit for a further widening of the franchise. As was pointed out by the Leader of my Party, Mr. Devassy, the whole mistake in the argument of the Hon'ble Secretary to Government was this. He assumes that the franchise committee report is perfect and that people were satisfied with the report. But according to me a case had been made out even then for giving a wider franchise to the people in the State. I understand that literacy is a qualification for a voter in British India. And within 2 miles of my place Nemmara every man who is a literate gets a vote, whereas in Nemmara there is no vote unless he has passed the School Final Examination. Therefore, without going further into the subject I say that a case has been made out for the constitution of a committee to go into these complicated matters. Don't think that I am giving here a ready made solution. My whole submission is that an expert body may be constituted for the purpose of going into this question thoroughly, conducting enquiries in several places and framing a franchsie system which will, in the words of the report of the committee of which the Hon'ble Secretary to Government was a prominent member, create tendencies for a healthy national outlook which is or should be the essence of sound citizenship.

The House rose for the day at 5 p.m.

C. J. MATHEW
Secretary to the Council

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